

Date: 5 October 2006
To: San Quentin Inmates
From: Robert Sillen, Receiver
Re: San Quentin Project Update: Putting San Quentin Under a Microscope

I am the federal Receiver appointed by Judge Thelton E. Henderson to make changes to improve medical care in California's prisons. That action sprang from the *Plata v. Schwarzenegger* law suit brought by the Prison Law Office over the poor quality of medical care delivered to inmate patients. One of my first steps is a special project at San Quentin, where this work is greatly needed. The SQ project began on July 5 and will last until November. Some of the work led by my team will take place during that time. Other items will be planned now, and happen later, such as new building construction.

The San Quentin Project will not fix everything wrong with San Quentin's medical system, but it will deliver some immediate help to the staff and patients, who provide and need care. It also will pave the way for on-going improvements in the future.

Last week, a group of journalists from the Marin Independent Journal, San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News and Sacramento Bee visited San Quentin to learn about the efforts to improve medical care here.

The SQ Project Team includes members of the Receiver's staff, San Quentin medical and custody staff -- including the Chief Medical Officer, Warden and Associate Warden for Health Care -- and leadership from the CDCR Division of Correctional Health Care Services.

What has happened so far?

Last month I reported to you about exciting improvements in the lab, medical records, medical supplies, specialty care, building maintenance and reception center physicals. All of these changes will make your medical care better.

Today I'd like to focus on a few areas of special importance to inmate patients.

1. PATIENT ADVOCACY PROGRAM

What it is and how to use it.

- Inmate patients should continue to use "sick call" slips to seek medical attention. When there is a complaint, the appeals process is available. To improve that process, the Project team has hired two Registered Nurse Patient Advocates to look at patient medical appeals (green 602s and yellow 1824s for disabled inmates) on a daily basis and to provide immediate urgent and emergency medical care as necessary. You may

- already have received a visit from a nurse advocate to follow up on your medical problem.
- Here are some tips for using the appeals system to get the best, and fastest, results. Remember, the appeals process should be used only if you are dissatisfied with the medical attention you have or have not received, not as a first resort when seeking care.
 - **DO:** File one appeal at a time. Multiple appeals on the same issue will not help you. In fact, they will clog the system and slow down the response time.
 - **DO:** Be simple and specific about your medical complaint and how you would like it handled. Avoid adding comments that are vague or not directly related to your medical problem.
 - **DON'T:** When responding to an appeal decision, do not raise a new issue on the same form. If there is a new problem, file a separate appeal.
 - **DON'T:** Do not mix medical and non-medical topics in a single appeal. The nurse advocate can only help you with medical issues.

2. INMATE MEDICAL JANITORIAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Coming soon!

Quality health care cannot be delivered in unclean, unsafe surroundings. In order to create clean conditions in medical clinics, San Quentin will start a new vocational program for inmates to learn medical cleaning. Those of you who participate can help improve the institution's clinics while also earning certification in a trade.

3. SPECIALTY APPOINTMENTS

More patients to get needed outside hospital and doctor visits.

The Project Team sent more than 100 patients out in August for overdue specialty appointments, correcting a problem that had gone on for years. The team has discovered about 80 more patients in need of urgent specialty care, and appointments are being scheduled for them now.

What is still to come?

- **UPDATE ON HIRING:** San Quentin's medical leaders are interviewing doctors, nurses, and other medical staff to provide better quality care to inmate patients.
- **UPDATE ON BUILDING:** Plans for a new medical building to replace housing block clinics are moving forward. The new building will eventually contain all the services currently offered in the outdated Neumiller building as well.

We will continue to provide you with updates on the Project as it develops. The San Quentin staff and Receiver's team have worked hard together and taken significant steps toward a quality medical care system for inmate patients.